DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 205 381 SE 035 420

AUTHOR Ball, Howard G.; Nordmann, Terrance J.
TITLE Scientific Creationism in Our Public School Curricula.
PUB DATE 1 Jul 81
NOTE 13p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Biology; College Science; *Creationism; Educational Legislation; Elementary School Science; Elementary Secondary Education; *Evolution; *Government Role; Higher Education; Science Curriculum; *Science Education; Scientific Concepts; Secondary School Science; *State Legislation

ABSTRACT

Aspects of the theory of "scientific creationism" are defined and compared to accepted evolutionary theory. Implications of the accommodation of creationism in public school science curricula are then discussed. A history of state legislation mandating the inclusion of creationism as an alternative to the theory of evolution is reviewed, and the status (as of April 1981) of legislative action in 13 states is summarized, as provided by the Institute for Creation Research in El Cajon, California. (CS)

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SCIENTIFIC CREATIONISM IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULA

Howard G. Ball, Dean
and Professor
School of Library Media
Alabama A&M University
Normal, AL 35762

Terrance J. Nordmann
Associate Professor
School of Library Media
Alabama A&M University
Normal, AL 35762

July 1, 1981

SE 035 420

Well, it is back with us again. The old argument over whether man decended from the apes.

A new movement called "scientific creationism" is making its impact on our state legislatures, judical systems, state education agencies as well as text book committee adoption policies. "Scientific creationism" is directed toward giving biblical-styled creation equal and balanced treatment alongside of evolution.

Evolutionist believe the present structure of things evolved from a state of randomness and has progressed to its present level. This evolutionary process is believed to have taken place throughout the past 5 billion years. However, the creation model presents the formation of our present structure out of orderliness and perfection. Planets, stars, minerals, organism, liquids and humans were created approximately 10,000 years ago. Creationist claim that all things are much as they were at the time of creation. The Universe, they claim, was designed for a specific purpose. Creationism is predicated upon a belief in a supernatural Creator.

The study of "origins" of humankind denotes a collective term encompassing both the theories of evolution as well as a biblical-styled creation.

Neither the process of evolution nor that of creation has ever been observed, analyzed and recorded. For these reasons alone, neither processes can be considered factual. The facts in the study of evolution come from the observed variation and differences among organisms. Therefore, the theory of evolution is that of mutation and natural selection. "Scientific creationism" points to the origins of the universe and of life and are better explained by a model of intelligent, purposeful design and special creation -- than by a randomness of mutations, survival of fittest, and natural selection.

Modern-day creationists, use the term "scientific creation" to dissociate their cause from its fundamentalist religious origins. However, both groups--the scientific creationists and the religious fundamentalists--support the theory that all the earth's life forms came into existence at one time and less than 10,000 years ago--as the design of a divine Creator.

The theory contrasts sharply with that proposed by evolutionists who believe life on earth is the result of billions of years of genetic and evironmental change.

Duane Gish, Associate Director, Institute for Creation Research in San Diego states:

> "Neither creationism nor evolutionism is in truth a scientific theory since a scientific theory requires repeated observations, and obviously no one witnessed the origin of the Universe. This is not the stuff of science....creationism is theistic and supernatural. Evolution is the opposite---atheistic."

Also, Richard Bliss points out:

> "By far the best approach to a study of origins is from a "Two-model" open-ended viewpoint. No one was there "in the beginning" and therefore, at best, we can only speculate about what may have occurred. One thing we do know is that life in its most simple form is extremely complex and seemingly has purposeful inter-relationships; all organisms, whether plant or animal, seem to have a significant role to play in the ecosystems of this planet."[1]

It is important for legislators, state government officials, local school board members, school administrators and instructional personnel as well as interested citizens to closely monitor the teaching of creationism in the schools. Under no conditions should the teaching of creationism become a catharsis for broadening a religious emphasis to include references to the Bible or to religious doctrines. Not only would this be counterproductive to the growth and development to the teaching of scientific creationism, but, it would also be indefensible when consideration is given to our First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

During the 1960's and '70's, proposed laws sought to mandate teaching of the literal account of creation as stated in Genesis. Thus, textbooks and teachers would be required to present as fact, that creation was completed in six days approximately 10,000 years ago, and that the great flood of Noah's time accounted for the distinction and fossilization of many organisms. Creationist believe that man came into sudden existence perhaps as the result of a divine Creator. The evolutionary theory, on the other hand, holds that man is the result of billions of years of genetic change.

In 1859, Charles Darwin developed and proposed the theory of evolution. Although evolutionism has wide acceptance by many of todays scientists and educators, the theory of evolution had its day in court. This was noted in the 1925 trial of John T. Scopes who taught the theory of evolution in a high school biology class in Dayton, Tennessee. The results of the "monkey trial" as it was euphemistically termed, cost Mr. Scopes his job.

Since that time, Darwin's theory has developed and is accepted by the majority of today's scientists and educators, as well as lay persons. Now it seems that the shoe is on the other foot. Creationists present objection is that "scientific creationism" is not given equal time in the teaching of the origins of humankind.

No one really knows or has determined how the universe and all its living things were created and there appears to be no positive evidence that will support theories of evolution or creation.

Until the late 1970's, there were few compelling reasons for examining the impact of creationism on the education policies of this nation. Several decades ago, the Scopes' trial brought focus on the validity of teaching

evolutionism in public schools. However, since that time, the issues have been somewhat dormant...the implication mute. With the impact of the politically active "moral majority" and the mass communicative qualities of video ministeries, there is a renewed outbreak of interest in bringing creationism back into the hallways of public education.

State legislators are sponsoring bills requiring that creationism receive equal and balanced treatment alongside evolution. Textbook publishing firms are offering textural materials that focus on creationism and these materials are now available in the education marketplace.

Some state legislatures as Arkansas are requiring that creation be taught if other theories of origins are being presented in their school districts. These and other ramifications are considerations for public school teachers. The equal and balanced treatment concept in the teaching of creationism would require public school pupils be taught biblical-styled creation as well as the theory of the evolution of life forms.

Teaching creationism alongside the more popular theory of evolution should be a matter of academic freedom. If academic freedom is a factor for consideration when formulating units of study, we become aware that the implementation of a scientific creation model is a result of a teacher's exercise of academic freedom from the external forces exercising moral and policital persuasion. Implementation of information on the study of the origins of humankind would be based mainly on the judgements of an educator's responsibility for planning and developing these units of study. This is inimical to the principles of academic freedom for teachers who desire to plan and subsequently deliver instruction on the origins of humankind.

However, in curriculum planning and development, academic freedom is usually not a consideration for public school personnel. Curriculum content and the resulting technologies and methodologies are usually mandated by a state legislature, a court decision, a state educational agencies or some other type of superordinate agency responsible for these decision-making activities.

Today, many state legislators are sponsoring bills that call for the balanced and equal treatment of both creationism and evolutionism in public school curricula.

States' house and senate education committees throughout the nation are reviewing the pros and cons of bills that will require the balanced treatment of "scientific creationism" alongside evolution in public school curricula.

There is also a question of whether we can legislate academic subjects into our schools under pressure from special interest groups. In the past, many of these bills have not been enacted by state legislators for it seems these bills violate the constitutional provision for the separation of church and state. Therefore, bills that would mandate the teaching of creationism to the exclusion of other theories of origins would readily be repealed in a court decision.

Some state legislatures as Arkansas have moved in a direction of requiring creationism to be taught (if other theories of origins are taught) by their school systems. Other states appear to be moving in this direction. State departments of education appear to be in a quandry as to the impact such legislation will have on their instructional programs.

Creationist have mustered a considerable amount of grassroots support throughout the South and the Midwest to get "creation" science in the states' public classrooms. They have lobbied governor's offices, legislatures, state textbook adoption committees, and state boards of education in their attempts to make creationism a permanent part of public classroom instruction.

A raft of equal time bills have been introduced in recent years into the state legislatures of Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Oregon, S. Carolina, S. Dakota, Texas, Washington, and Louisana, to name but a few. Only Tennessee's bill passed mandating the teaching of creationism even in the absence of other theories of origins. Subsequently, a suit initiated in 1975 by the National Association of Biology Teachers led to the courts declaring the Tennessee statute unconstitutional.

It becomes readily apparent that the inclusion of "scientific creationism" into public school curricula cannot be accomplished at the classroom level. Such action is usually mandated or sanctioned by an act of the state legislature, a court decision, or a state department of education policy. In states where creationism is presently being considered to receive equal and balanced treatment alongside of evolutionism, the teaching of creationism will be mandated or sanctioned by a regulatory entity.

As of early April, 1981, the following reports regarding the legislative leadership for teaching creationism in public schools have come to the Institute for Creation Research, El Cojon, California. The following is a summary of reports received at that time from ICR.

Alabama	Bills present in both legislative houses. Action deferred until 1982 legislative session.
Arkansas	Has a mandatory bill that requires all schools to teach both creationism and evolutionism where one is taught.
California	Requires creation to be taught in social studies. In science, evolution can be taught by itself as theory. University of San Diego presents a course conducted by evolutionists along with participation by creationists. San Francisco State offices offer a creation/evolution course.
Florida	Tampa School District has voluntarily initiated the "equal and balanced treatment" concept. St. Petersburg School District approaches the teaching of "scientific creation" in the way of inquiry.
Georgia	Legislative action deferred until 1982 legislative session. Sixteen school districts of local boards of education have approved resolutions that scientific creation be given unbiased treatment.
	Fifteen counties require it to be taught.
Indiana	House and Senate bills introduced but action has been deferred until 1982 sessions. (permissive) Two thirds of Indiana school districts using creation materials.
Kentucky	State Department of Education issued a statement that all school districts could spend funds for creation materials.
Louisana	Bill favorably voted out of Senate committee. Resolution passed Senate requiring 8 months' feasibility study.
Maine	Caribou (voluntarily) has approved the teaching of both models.
Mississippi	Voluntarily approved for Ocean Springs School District.
New York	A draft syllabus on biology distributed to all school districts. Tested in 10 districts in 1980-81. Anticipated testing in 40 more districts in 1981-82 school year.
Ohio	Cleveland has approved books on creationism. Columbus using creation-oriented materials.
Texas	Dallas school board legislation requires use of approved creationism books.

Over the past two decades, court decisions have generally gone against the teaching of creationism. Recent court decisions and legal opinions have inhibited legislative efforts toward mandating equal and balanced treatment of scientific creationism. In 1968, the United States Supreme Court ruled against an Arkansas state statute prohibiting the teaching of evolution. Therefore, advocates for the teaching of scientific creationism have been seeking ways in which the biblical account of creation would receive equal treatment along with the theory of evolution in our nation's school curricula. Modern-day creationists, many of whom are articulate and knowledgeable about evolution theories, seldom refer to the biblical or Genesis story of creation. They base their arguments on biogenesis, that is, the origin of life, from data acquired from scientific areas as biochemistry, theromodynamics, geology, and anthropology.

In 1975, California's attorney general presented a legal opinion which pointed out that creationist materials have an inherent religious basis and would entangle the state with religion.

In 1977, a state court in Indiana ruled against the approval of a creationist textbook by that state's Textbook Adoption Commission. The decision of the court pointed out that it indicated a particular religious preference and promoted sectarian religious doctrine in the public schools.

Creationists are continuing their personal campaigns to lobby legislative groups about creationism. Although thwarted in their efforts to state legislated bills passed in many states, creationist feel eventually bills will be passed requiring equal and balanced treatment of the creation model alongside other theory of origins.

No doubt there will be a litany of court battles over the next few years. The creationists have a voice they want heard. However, this dispute has been going on for over 120 years, and will not be resolved quickly.

Educators as a whole are reluctant to express their opinions on this issue. The people who seem to be speaking out are those in the religious field with deep convictions as well as a small number of scientists.

Let us first look at the notion that neither the theory of evolution or that of "scientific creation" has as value for our public school curricula. Both evolution and creation are faith beliefs; neither is more congruous than the other. Therefore, neither can be ascribed as more incongruous than the other. Out of the nature of things, the evolution model seems to be held by a majority of scientific and lay persons. Even as the creation model is accepted by a minority of persons, creationism should not be denegated simply on this basis. The questions educators must ponder are:

* Are there reasonable data that seem to conflict with the evolutionary model as it is supported by many of today's scientists?
* Does the creation model offer an alternative to present day thinking?
* Does the creation model fill a void unexplained by the evolutionary process?

As educators, we are constantly in quest of knowledge and understanding of things about us.

We should ask of ourselves this one question: "Which model does scientific data seem to fit best in my particular teaching situation?" If one model proves to have the exclusivity over the other then that model would be best used. However, if both models seem to provide specific, meaningful

information that the other does not provide, then consideration should be given to equal and balanced treatment of both models. As Morris[2] points out...

> "Though people might speak of the "theory of evolution" or of the "theory of creation", such terminology is imprecise. This is because neither can be tested. A valid scientific hypothesis must be capable of being formulated experimentally... A more proper approach is to think in terms of two scientific models, the evolution model and the creation model. A "model" is a conceptual framework, an orderly system of thought, within which one tries to correlate observable data, and even to predict data...The model which correlates the greater number of data, with the smallest number of unsolved contradictory data, would be accepted as the more probably correct model."

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3. Skogg, Gerald, "The Textbook Battle Over Creationism." The Christian Century. Vol. 97, No. 32, October 15, 1980. pp. 972-76.